

CHAPTER XIII.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT—LORD ELGIN'S REPLY—SIR JOHN BOWRING'S VISIT TO THE PEIHO—COURSE PURSUED ON THAT OCCASION—LORD ELGIN'S APPLICATION FOR GUNBOATS—THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION OF SICCAWAY—SYSTEM OF EDUCATION—BARREN RESULTS OF MISSIONARY LABOUR—SUPERSTITIOUS PRACTICES OF CONVERTS—A "FEAST OF TABERNACLES"—THE CATHEDRAL OF TONK-A-DOO—DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE—NON-ARRIVAL OF THE ADMIRAL—DEPARTURE OF THE PLENIPOTENTIARIES FOR THE NORTH—THE MIATOU STRAITS—AGROUND ON A SANDBANK—ARRIVAL IN THE GULF OF PECHELEE—DREARY WEATHER—AN EXPEDITION ACROSS THE BAR—JUNK-HUNTING—ARRIVAL OF THE AMERICAN MINISTER—DIFFICULTIES OF THE SITUATION—UNNECESSARY DELAYS—DIPLOMATIC DIFFICULTIES—ASPECT OF THE FORTS—ARRIVAL OF THE ADMIRAL—THE DESPATCH-VESSELS CROSS THE BAR—EXPIRY OF THE DELAY—POSTPONEMENT OF ATTACK—POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE DELAY.

THE day after our arrival at Shanghai, Lord Elgin received from Peking the reply of the Imperial Government to the despatches which I had delivered for transmission at Soo-chow, a month before. Although by the Treaty of Nanking the right is secured to Her Majesty's representative in China, to correspond direct with the highest Imperial authority in the Empire, the prime-minister Yu, to whom the com-

munications of his Excellency had been addressed, did not condescend to respond, but instructed the authorities of the Two Kiangs to make a communication to the British Plenipotentiary, in which, after adverting to the recent proceedings at Canton, it was stated that Yeh was in consequence degraded, and superseded by Hwang, who alone was authorised to manage barbarian affairs at that city, whither we were enjoined to return, and at no other place. The prime-minister went on to state, that "there being a particular sphere of duty allotted to every official on the establishment of the Celestial Empire, and the principle that between them and the foreigner there is no intercourse being one ever religiously adhered to by the servants of our government of China, it would not be proper for me to reply in person to the letter of the English Minister. Let your Excellencies (the authorities of the Two Kiangs) therefore transmit to him all that I have said above, and his letter will no way be left unanswered."

This letter was returned to the authorities of the Two Kiangs, as an unjustifiable disregard of that clause of the treaty of Nankin which states, "That it is agreed that her Britannic Majesty's chief high officer in China shall correspond with the Chinese high officers, both in the capital and in the provinces, under the term, 'communication.'"

Under these circumstances, Lord Elgin, after quoting the above clause in reply, states that it is his intention to "proceed at once to the north, in order that

he may place himself in more direct communication with the high officers of the Imperial Government at the capital." As this was a measure which the Ambassador had always considered the most likely to be productive of successful results, so far as negotiation was concerned, he did not regret that the unwarrantable course taken by the prime-minister rendered the step imperative. The French, Russian, and American ministers received communications more or less to the same effect, except that Count Poutiatine was directed to repair to the Amour, instead of to Canton; and they all agreed with Lord Elgin that the proper, and indeed only course to be pursued, was to appear with as little delay as possible with a sufficiently strong force at the mouth of the Peiho, to enforce that compliance with treaty obligations which the Government so pertinaciously refused.

It was interesting, in connection with the determination thus arrived at by the allied Plenipotentiaries, to refer to the document found in Yeh's yamun, relating to the visit of Sir John Bowring, and Mr Maclane the United States Commissioner, to the Peiho in 1854. They too had endeavoured, but with even less success, to communicate with the Imperial Government through the authorities of the Two Kiangs. Sir J. Bowring had been refused an audience altogether, and Mr Maclane stopped at Kwan-shan, outside Soochow, as already described, and there remonstrated with on the impropriety of his proceeding to the north. At first Iliang, the governor-general, seemed

to think these remonstrances had proved effectual ; but he afterwards had misgivings on the subject, for, alluding to Sir John Bowring's complaint against Yeh for want of politeness, and the visit he threatens to the Peiho in consequence, he says : " It is, however, a standing device of the barbarians to make particular circumstances the plea of demands to be insisted on ; whatever these chiefs may insinuate (or whisper) against Yeh-Ming-Chin, it is evident that Yeh-Ming-Chin is he whom they are used to fear. They say they are going to Tientsin. This may be, notwithstanding, an assertion made to compel acquiescence in their demands. Your slave has commanded them with affectionate earnestness to stay ; and the ships of their chief have not as yet departed. Still there is no certainty, so inconsistent and capricious is the barbarian character, that they will not after all sail north, and thereby attempt to constrain the Imperial authority, and the high provincial authorities of the coast jurisdictions." To which the Emperor replies that it is quite true that " it is the nature of barbarians to be cunning and malicious ;" and he further directs Iliang to inform them that " a force is assembled at Tientsin as the clouds in number" —all clearly showing how much the presence of foreigners was dreaded in the neighbourhood of the capital, and how effectual in all probability any pressure applied there would be.

It was only to be regretted that this very expedition, to which the above papers refer, had gone to the

north and returned *re infecta*. This circumstance in itself was calculated to diminish the effect of another ; and indeed, as we afterwards discovered, the same Commissioners were sent to meet us at Takoo, as had met the English and American Commissioners on the former occasion, and no doubts seemed to have been entertained at headquarters that they were endowed with a special faculty for dealing with barbarians, and that we should be as easily disposed of as our predecessors.

The decision in favour of an early move northward was arrived at on the 1st of April, the non-appearance of any Imperial Commissioner before the last day of March, the period appointed for the commencement of negotiations at Shanghai, having released the allied Plenipotentiaries from their engagements upon this head. In view of this contingency, which Lord Elgin had before leaving Hong-Kong anticipated as probable, he had upon the 2d of March addressed to the Admiral a letter, stating that he was about to proceed to Shanghai, in the hope of meeting there a properly qualified plenipotentiary ; but his Lordship went on to say : " If I should be disappointed in this hope, it may be necessary, in pursuance of the policy prescribed by her Majesty's Government, to bring pressure to bear at some point near the capital. With a view to this contingency, I think it desirable that your Excellency should collect at Shanghai, towards the end of March, or as soon after as may be convenient, as large a fleet, more

especially of gunboats drawing little water, as you can spare from service elsewhere."*

In reply to which communication the Admiral states : " I beg to acquaint your Excellency, that for some time past my attention has been directed to this object. One of the gunboats, and one gun-vessel have already sailed for Shanghai, and arrangements are in progress for others to follow. It is my intention to sail for Shanghai in the ' Calcutta,' should nothing prevent, on or about the 16th instant." As a month had now elapsed since this letter was written, and every day was of importance, we were anxiously looking out for the first instalment of gunboats now due, as well as for the Admiral himself, whose arrival was daily expected.

Meantime the weather at Shanghai was favourable for excursions, though the neighbourhood presented few attractions of any interest. One day we took a walk of twelve miles to visit the Roman Catholic College and Missionary Establishment of Siccaway. The country is such a dead level that pedestrian exercise soon becomes wearisome. We followed narrow paths between fields of wheat, beans, and other cultivation reeking with high-flavoured manure, but bearing nevertheless thin crops and abundance of weeds. The land in China, even in the elaborate cultivation of their kitchen-gardens, is never properly worked. The surface merely is scratched, and then deluged with strong manure. The consequence is

* Blue-Book, p. 223.

that, though the young crops sometimes look green and promising, they seldom bear heavily.

The mission buildings are pleasantly situated on the banks of a small canal. We were received at the door by some priests, dressed as usual in Chinese costume, who conducted us over the establishment. We found the schoolrooms full of noisy students, all swaying their bodies to and fro over their desks, and reciting their lessons to themselves in a loud monotonous chant, each apparently profoundly indifferent to the sharp tones which were ringing in his ears from his neighbour on either side. There were altogether eighty young men and boys in the several schoolrooms, deep in the study of the classics and polite learning of the Chinese, for the system of the Roman Catholics consists not so much in imbuing the students with the dogmas of their own faith, as in educating them to such a point in the literature of their country, as shall enable them to compete successfully with their fellows for the highest honours of the Empire, at the competitive examinations. By these means, if they do not gain converts, they secure to themselves protection in high places, and ever after have friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, upon whom they can rely; for the tie formed between the student and his teacher at these establishments is not easily broken, and the kindness and toleration with which he has been treated by the Roman Catholics, leaves even in the mind of the stern Confucian a strong impression in favour of that class to whom he

owes his present greatness, and who, whatever their tenets, have at all events in his own case practised some of the noblest maxims of the great philosopher. I was informed that the Roman Catholic missions could boast of converts even among the mandarins ; while numerous instances of devotion and acts of private charity to the missionaries and their converts were related, both on the part of those Chinese who were members of the Church, and of those who had merely benefited from its institutions.

Notwithstanding, however, the system upon which Roman Catholic missionary enterprise is based in China, of conforming as much as possible to existing prejudices, and conciliating to the uttermost where it cannot convince, I do not think that even under the new treaty, or the most favourable conditions which can possibly be devised, its influence will ever be felt upon the governing classes. With the masses in almost all countries where it has been introduced at all, the Roman Catholic religion has been popular ; but the emissaries of that plagiarist on their own philosopher, Mons. Auguste Comte, would have a greater chance of success among the literati of China than those of the Pope. I was informed by a high clerical Protestant authority, that, out of the mass of Protestant converts hitherto made, there were only five whom he really believed to be sincere ; and there is no reason to suppose that the proportion should be greater among the more intelligent of the Roman Catholics.

Among the ignorant and superstitious, doubtless many may possess a sort of mongrel belief ; but their faith cannot be worth much, when it is obtained by conceding to them the permission to observe their own festivals, to worship at the graves of their ancestors, and go through all their own ceremonies of mourning, with the exception of burning joss-paper. At Chusan, indeed, our reverend friend told us that the converts often refused to take part in these ceremonies ; but the fact that they should be permitted to do so, and still retain their Christian name and profession, is significant. The point is one which has caused a serious dissension between the Dominicans and Jesuits, the latter being in favour of the greatest latitude being given to the religious practices of the converts. The mission at Siccaway was almost entirely conducted by Jesuits. The best possible understanding evidently subsisted between them and their pupils, whose countenances all bore evidence of happiness and contentment. Notwithstanding the fact that twelve hours out of the twenty-four were devoted to work or religious exercises, the establishment was kept scrupulously clean : the dormitories were models of neatness ; so that habits foreign to the Chinese domestic character were being instilled into the inmates. Some specimens of modelling in clay, by one of the elder students, gave promise of considerable talent as an artist.

The day of our visit to Siccaway happened to be a holiday in honour of the approach of spring—a

Chinese "Feast of Tabernacles," and we met crowds in gala dresses, returning from the ceremonies which they had attended to propitiate the Ceres of the Celestial Empire. Numbers of Bonzes in long grey robes were accompanied by soldiers in tall conical head-dresses, like red foolscaps; and at one of the temples which we entered, gongs were beating, and worshippers prostrating themselves incessantly: perhaps some of them formed part of the crowd we saw no less reverently adoring the Virgin Mary on the following Sunday at the Cathedral at Tonk-a-doo. Here one side of the spacious area was filled by a large attendance of Chinese female converts, whose devout demeanour testified to their sincerity, and whose neat and occasionally handsome costume, and pleasing countenances, formed an agreeable contrast to the majority of the fair sex the stranger meets in a Chinese town, and of which, if he has no opportunity of seeing the better classes, he will probably form an unfavourable opinion.

The Cathedral is adorned with sacred pictures drawn in conformity with Chinese notions, though the shaven crowns and tails of the Apostles, and small feet of the women, are startling to an occidental eye; but the principal curiosity of the Cathedral is the organ, which has been constructed by Chinese mechanics, and the pipes of which are composed simply of the hollow bamboo of different sizes. The tones which it emitted, though powerful, were soft and melodious, except in some of the higher notes.

There is a college attached to the Cathedral. The students here are all converts, and many of them were undergoing a course of preparation as native missionaries and catechists.

The efforts of the Protestant missionaries at Shanghai are devoted rather to the education of youth than the conversion of adults. Ningpo is regarded as the station at which their labours in this latter respect have been most satisfactory. At Shanghai, about 400 children are under Protestant instruction, but they are not, for the most part, taught English, and only the most rudimentary works in their own classics. Their education seems likely, therefore, to be of little service to them, either amongst their own countrymen or foreigners. It has been found at Hong-Kong that a knowledge of English exposes youths to temptations, against which not even the principles they have, or ought to have imbibed, can protect them ; and in too many instances the knowledge they have acquired only serves to increase their evil influence. In the American schools at Shanghai, however, English is taught ; some of the girls in the schools of these latter missions, more especially, had attained a very extensive and sound knowledge of the language ; and, so far as one could judge from their appearance, the most favourable results might be augured from the training they had undergone.

There is probably no country in which missionary enterprise is conducted under greater difficulties than in China, our isolated position, on the rim, as it were,

of the Empire, rendering it difficult for the missionaries to come into such close contact with the people as will enable them to acquire any lasting influence. A period of from two to three years after his arrival in the country is employed by the missionary in learning the language, which confines him to the particular districts in which the dialect is spoken, and which is not understood elsewhere. He is even then not able to settle away from those ports where the vices of the European population go far towards neutralising his efforts. The Roman Catholic, on the other hand, does not remain above four or five months at a station, before he is turned out upon the field of his labours, and left to pick up the language as best he may, living with the Chinese, dressing as they do, and altogether identifying himself with those whom he seeks to influence. With the exception of Mr Burn, comparatively few of our missionaries have followed this example. The opening of the country, however, by the new Treaty, and the protection which it guarantees to Christian missionaries, will doubtless inaugurate a new era in evangelical enterprise.

On the 3d of April we received intelligence from the south that the Admiral had postponed his departure for ten days. Though considerably embarrassed by this circumstance, Lord Elgin decided, in conjunction with Baron Gros, that it was expedient that the allied Plenipotentiaries should proceed to the mouth of the Peiho, in accordance with the deter-

mination which had been so strongly expressed to the Chinese Government, as any appearance of wavering at so critical a juncture would be liable to entail serious results. (In order, however, as far as possible to carry out his original policy, His Excellency took on himself the responsibility of requesting Sir Frederick Nicolson, then senior officer at Shanghai, to supply him with as large a naval force as could be spared from the station.) The opportune arrival of the Highflyer, as relief of the Pique, enabled Sir F. Nicolson to accompany us himself to the north, and the Cormorant, despatch gun-vessel, and Slaney gunboat, completed our little squadron. His Excellency, before his departure, left a letter for the Admiral, in which he states : * “ I am most anxious for the arrival of the gunboats drawing little water, which are referred to in your letter to me of the 2d ultimo, because I am confident that nothing will be so likely to bring the Imperial Government to terms as the appearance of vessels of war within the bar of the Peiho river. Such vessels will, moreover, be indispensable if it should be necessary to ascend that river to Tientsin.”

At daylight on the morning of the 10th we left Shanghai with the Slaney in tow : the Russian steamer “ Amerika,” with Count Poutiatine on board, had left a day or two previously, and the Audacieuse and Minnesota were to follow immediately. Instructions were left with Captain Shad-

* Blue-Book, Earl of Elgin to Sir M. Seymour, 8th April 1858.

well, of the Highflyer, to forward without delay any British man-of-war that might arrive at Shanghai.

We were favoured with lovely weather up the Yellow Sea. The force of the north-west monsoon was apparently expended, and we were followed by light southerly gales. To these warm winds, and the low temperature of the water in consequence of the melting of the winter snows, was doubtless to be attributed the haze that shrouded the horizon, and through which, on the morning of the 13th, loomed indistinctly the lofty promontory of Shantung, the easternmost point of China. After rounding the cape we coasted along its northern shore, passing the port of Chee-foo, where we observed many junks at anchor in the distance. This town lies at the head of the bay of Ki-san-sen, and was entered by Lord Macartney by mistake for Teng-chow. A high rocky promontory, connected with the mainland by a low sandy isthmus, terminates in a bold peak, rising to a height of 1130 feet above the sea ; beyond this the shore is sandy, with a background of barren mountains. Altogether the scenery reminded me of some parts of the coast of Barbary, while the climate, on that day, was exactly that of the Mediterranean in early spring. Soon after, our experience destroyed any hope of this analogy lasting.

At 5 P.M. we sighted the large walled town of Teng-chow, one of the ports opened by the new treaty. The city is in the form of a parallelogram, and of considerable extent, the walls running along the sea-

shore for upwards of three miles. At the extreme right they terminate in a hill, crowned by a citadel and joss-house. The coast, however, does not afford any shelter at this point, nor did we see any junks at anchor off the town. The most available harbour for Teng-chow is situated in the Miatou group. These islands, immediately opposite the city, are separated from the mainland by straits about four miles across ; the largest and nearest is Chang-shan—it is seven miles long and three broad. Here, in all probability, will be established the future foreign settlement. It forms one side of a secure bay, in which we saw an enormous fleet of grain-junks at anchor. We were allowed some little leisure to make observations on the subject, as, while steaming rapidly through the straits, we suddenly grounded with considerable force upon a sandbank at a spot where the chart gave nine fathoms of water. Our gunboat in tow had acquired such impetus that she ran into our quarter, and lost her mizen-mast before she could get clear of us. A tide running like a mill-race, and a strong north-west breeze, increased the difficulties of the situation ; but by dint of getting all our heavy gear aft, going vigorously full speed astern, and making the men roll and jump the ship, at the expiration of an hour our exertions were rewarded with success. Although it was by this time dark, our indefatigable and skilful master, Mr Court, carried us safely through the straits. As this gentleman had performed the north-west passage as the master of Sir Robert Maclure's ship

“ Investigator,” his nerves had undergone a training which rendered them proof under all circumstances.

The province of Shantung, of which Teng-chow is the principal seaboard city, possesses the enviable notoriety in China of having produced its greatest philosopher, Confucius. Its most distinguishing feature is its lofty range of mountains, of which the highest, Tai-shan, is celebrated throughout the Empire. Notwithstanding its mountainous character and barren aspect, Shantung alone contains a population equal to that of the United Kingdom, distributed over an area not exceeding that of England, Scotland, and Wales.

Daylight of the 14th April found us ploughing the muddy waters of the Gulf. Our soundings, which did not vary, gave us ten fathoms. In many respects the Gulf of Pechelee resembles the Sea of Azoff, but its waters are not quite so green or thick. We observed numerous junks on their way to or from the mouth of the Peiho ; and the varied character of their construction proved that many were from the ports of Manchouria, or perhaps even the Corea. Towards the afternoon it began to shoal, and this was the only indication that we had reached our destination. Nothing could be more dreary than the scene when the cry of four fathoms was followed by the order “ Stop her ! ” which we were loth to construe into “ Stop here. ” It was dreadful to contemplate the prospect of remaining permanently at anchor in so forlorn a spot. Not a sign of land broke the

monotony of the dim hazy horizon. The turbid waters were lashed into foam by gales which spun round to every point on the compass with incredible velocity, and kept the gulf in the condition of a caldron of boiling pea-soup. Just as we were going to let go the anchor in despair, we descried through the misty atmosphere the little "Amerika" at anchor, and steamed off to her for consolation and company. Count Poutiatine had already communicated with the shore, and an opaque white-button mandarin had received a note which he had sent ashore notifying his arrival. The party had not landed, but a large crowd of spectators had collected on the shore to inspect them. Presents had afterwards been sent off, which, however, the Russians had declined.

While communicating with the Amerika, the Pique hove in sight; and as we found that, at the Amerika's anchorage, we should be aground at low-water, we weighed and anchored within half a mile of the frigate. At low tide we had twenty-two feet of water, the distance from the shore being somewhat over eight miles. As the coast of the province of Chili is very flat, the mud forts at the mouth of the Peiho were only visible from the deck of the Furious during brilliant sunsets, and on other rare occasions, which, however, for the first few days of our stay did not present themselves. Cutting north-east gales swept over the dreary waters of the Gulf, and whistled dolefully through the shrouds, ill preparing us to meet the sudden transition; blasts of hot air,

charged with impalpable dust from the desert of Gobi, not only completely obscured the horizon, but cracked our lips, parched our throats, and insinuated itself into the innermost recesses of our clothing, or served as a general pepper to our food. Then would come another change of wind, and a pitiless rain ; and the dust we had been anathematising became visible, as in muddy runnels it trickled down the rigging and sides of the funnels.

On the second day after our arrival in the Gulf, the Cormorant made her appearance, and anchored near the bar. (As Lord Elgin had not abandoned his intention of pushing up to Tientsin with as little delay as possible, the Slaney, Lieutenant Hoskins, was sent across the bar to capture a few empty junks, into which the Cormorant might discharge her coal and other dead-weight, previous to trying the experiment of crossing.

I proceeded in the Slaney on this expedition, glad of the opportunity of obtaining a nearer view of the forts of which we had heard so much and knew so little. We found the bar to be about a mile wide, the channel marked by stakes, from which hung bunches of black net. At the top of high-water (springs), there was upwards of eleven feet of water at the shallowest part ; and, as we afterwards found, at dead neaps the depth was eighteen inches or two feet. There is, however, scarcely any inequality in the surface of the bottom. For a mile it is as flat as a billiard-table, and as hard.

Crowds of junks were entering the river like chickens running for shelter. Our appearance evidently caused no little sensation among them, which was not diminished when they saw one of their number suddenly boarded by a boat-load of barbarians, and her head put out to sea. Propelling the unwieldy craft with long poles, they accompanied their efforts to escape with a loud cry of alarm, which was taken up by each successive junk, until the sounds died away in the distance. However, we had no hostile intentions, and our wants were limited to four or five empty junks: two of these, capable of carrying a hundred or a hundred and fifty tons each, were despatched to the Cormorant; the others were taken in tow by the Slaney, and were appropriated by the Pique and Furious, as likely to prove useful in our ascent of the river.

(This expedition had led us right across the bar, and we pushed our reconnaissance to within a mile of the forts. We made out three forts on the south, and two on the north bank of the river. Innumerable banners fluttered from the parapets and embrasures, waving defiance; and an extensive crowd, probably of soldiers, were drawn up along the whole length of the batteries, watching, no doubt with no small wonderment, the evolutions of the little Slaney as she pounced upon her prey, and went puffing off over the bar in the wind's eye with a string of junks at her stern. Some of these junks were of a different construction from those we had been accustomed to see in the

south; many of them had come across the Gulf from New-chwang with grain or beans, and some very possibly from the Corea. The crews at first were much alarmed, but upon discovering that our intentions were harmless, entirely recovered their equanimity; and when further informed that they should be sent on shore and receive a reasonable sum as the hire of their boats whilst they were employed, they seemed quite reconciled to the arrangement, and proved their confidence in us some time after, by getting paid part of the junk hire in advance, and then taking advantage of a dark night secretly to come and endeavour to abstract the junks from their moorings.

The next day, two petty mandarins came on board, evidently on a tour of inspection, as they were not the bearers of any message; indeed, hitherto we had had no official communication with the shore.) The arrival of the United States steamer Mississippi, with Mr Reed on board, doubtless afforded these gentlemen fresh matter for speculation.

The Nimrod, Captain Dew, a despatch gun-vessel of rather greater draught than the Cormorant, and which had been forwarded by Captain Shadwell, reached the anchorage on the 19th; but by this time the spring-tides had passed. It was considered impossible for the Nimrod, and a rash experiment for the Cormorant, to attempt the trajet. Under these circumstances there was only one gunboat available, and although it was highly probable that at

that period she might have passed the forts without being fired upon, still it was a risk which neither Lord Elgin nor Sir Frederick Nicolson felt justified in incurring. There was therefore no alternative but to await patiently the arrival of the admirals and a larger force — a necessity which ultimately compelled Lord Elgin to abandon entirely his original policy. (It had been his hope, when he proceeded from Shanghai to the north, that at or about the time of his arrival in the Gulf of Pechelee, a force, especially of gunboats drawing little water, would be collected there, sufficiently large to enable him to approach the capital at once, and to conclude a peace, at such a period of the year as would have admitted of his visiting Peking before the hot season.)

If this plan had been carried out, not only would many of the inconveniences I shall have to detail been avoided, but the difficult question of direct intercourse with the Emperor would have been solved, at a moment when there were unusual facilities for settling it satisfactorily. Unfortunately, this hope was not realised. (In order to employ the time which elapsed before the arrival of the gunboats, it was necessary to spend five weeks in temporising at the mouth of the Peiho, during which time the Chinese authorities not unnaturally strengthened their defences, and sent orders to the Braves in the neighbourhood of Canton to harass us in our occupation of the city. A further consequence of this delay was, that before the Treaty of Tientsin was concluded,

the thermometer was 96° in the shade,—a state of things which, coupled with the urgent call from Hong-Kong and Canton for the return of the force, rendered any advance on the capital highly inexpedient. Owing to this circumstance, it was left for the minister charged with the ratification of the treaty to solve the delicate questions involved in the reception of a British mission at Pekin.

Meanwhile our only excitement consisted in sounding and reconnoitring the mouth of the river. The result of our investigations only confirmed us in our original estimate of the insignificance of the forts, which were totally unprotected from attack from the rear, and, though formidable in their extent and display of banners, were little more than a line of mud batteries. During the five weeks which elapsed before they were attacked, hundreds of men were employed in strengthening and adding to them; we could observe guns of heavy calibre daily taking the places in the embrasures of the flaunting banners.

Sometimes sundry members of the mission would dispense with naval assistance upon these occasions, and one dark night when three or four of us were navigating a very unseaworthy native craft, we were caught in a storm, and more by good luck than good management were picked up by the Slaney, and thus saved from prematurely making acquaintance with the forts of Takoo. It needed an occasional adventure of this sort to relieve the excessive monotony of our existence.

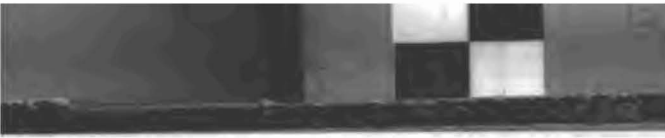
The arrival of Baron Gros, on the 21st, was the signal for renewed diplomatic action, and the four Plenipotentiaries, being now assembled in the Gulf, decided on severally despatching to the prime-minister Yu, with whom they had already communicated through Soo-chow, another letter. Lord Elgin, in this despatch to the prime-minister, notified his arrival at the mouth of the Peiho, in pursuance of the intimation expressed in his letter from Shanghai of the 1st instant, of placing himself in more immediate communication with the high officers of the Imperial Government at the capital; and his Excellency went on to say, that he was "prepared to meet at Takoo, either on board of his own ship or on shore, a minister duly authorised by the Emperor of China to treat with him, and to settle by negotiation the several questions affecting the relations of Great Britain with China, which are detailed in a letter of the undersigned to the prime-minister, bearing date February 11.

"If before the expiry of six days from the date of the present communication, a minister so accredited shall not have presented himself at Takoo, the undersigned will consider this pacific overture to have been rejected, and deem himself to be thenceforward at liberty to adopt such further measures for enforcing the just claims of his government on that of China as he may think expedient."

(Although Tientsin had been the point originally intended for negotiation, Lord Elgin was compelled,

now that he found himself deprived of all certainty of ever reaching that place, to name Takoo.

On the 24th April the Slaney towed in the boats of the four Powers, their several flags floating gaily in the morning breeze. I accompanied Mr Wade, who was charged with the delivery of the letter. As it was low-water, we left the Slaney at the bar, and pulled into the river to a wooden causeway, which, crossing the mud flat from the centre fort, seemed to indicate the principal landing-place. Here we were received by a transparent blue-button mandarin, who apologised profusely for being obliged to refuse our request to land. So we received him into our boats, and delivered the letters to him. Meanwhile a large crowd, chiefly of soldiers, collected round us as spectators. They were fine-looking men, with a uniform consisting of an ample brown cape with a broad pink border, over long blue coats and trousers. During the short while that the conference between Mr Wade and the mandarin lasted in the boat, we were narrowly inspecting the "terrain" generally. Some of the brass pieces were of enormous calibre, but I could not count above fifty at this time. At the other end of the jetty to which we were moored, a large blue tent had been pitched for the reception of sundry high officials who were expected. At that moment some of the Russians were on shore, having an audience with the treasurer of the province. We, however, had not insinuated ourselves so deeply into the good graces of the Chinese as our allies, whose neutral



attitude naturally placed them on a different footing *vis-à-vis* the Imperial Government, which every day of delay enabled them to improve.

From this point the forts looked like a range of huge perigord pies, the flags rather aiding their resemblance to ornamented pastry. These banners were angular in shape, with a scalloped border and white spots on a blue or yellow ground.

As we had at this time eighteen gunboats in the China seas, we were still sanguine enough to hope that, before the expiry of the term fixed in the above-mentioned letter to the Prime Minister, the two Admirals would arrive in the Gulf, accompanied by a force of gunboats sufficient, should that step prove necessary, to render the capture of the forts an easy operation. Great was our disappointment when, after beating back from our mission into the forts, we found the only accession to the squadron was the flagship *Calcutta*, but no gunboat or chance of any for some days. However, those energetic officers Captains Dew and Saumarez had satisfied themselves, after repeated inspections of the bar, that it would be possible to force the long-heeled craft they commanded across it. The *Coromandel* (Admiral's tender), a paddle-wheel steamer, was also available for the same purpose ; and the appearance, on the following day, of Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, accompanied by all his force, including three gunboats, once more raised our hopes of getting speedily to Tientsin.

The arrival of these vessels convinced us that,

so far as the monsoon was concerned, there existed no obstacle to the passage of our gunboats along the coast. They had already weathered the Cape, and were now not surely incapable of following in the wake of the French. Indeed, had there been any chance of delay arising from this cause, it would probably have been mentioned when the gunboats were first applied for. Inasmuch, however, as, notwithstanding their absence, (the allied force had now become formidable, Lord Elgin lost no time in repeating to the Admiral his opinion of the importance of a movement on Tientsin ; and it was arranged that an attempt should be made at the first spring-tides to push the despatch-vessels over the bar, so that they might be in readiness, should the answer of the Prime Minister render necessary the capture of the forts on the 1st of May. On the 28th of April the first attempt was made, but the tide was not sufficiently high for our vessels, though some of the French gunboats, which drew less water, succeeded in scraping over. On the following day, however, the Nimrod was forced over by her indefatigable commander, while the Cormorant ran past all the French gunboats, and anchored within about 1500 yards of the forts. When this little squadron was joined by the Coromandel, we had seven men-of-war inside the bar.

On the 30th an extremely unsatisfactory communication was received from Tan, governor-general of Chili, stating that he had, in conjunction with a man-

darin named Tsung-lun, director-general of granaries, and Wu, under-secretary of the cabinet, been appointed Commissioner to meet the foreign Plenipotentiaries at Takoo, and enter upon negotiations. As he did not allude to the nature or extent of the powers with which he was invested, he was called upon to define them, and informed that, if they were not as full as those held by Lord Elgin, and specified in his former communications as required, he (the Ambassador) would regard his pacific overture for the appointment of a "duly qualified officer" as rejected. The reply to this letter was to the effect that the powers of Tan, Tsung, and Wu were limited to reporting our demands, &c., to the capital. The whole of this correspondence took place on the 30th. Under these circumstances, the only course left seemed to be, to send in an ultimatum to Tan, stating that the Plenipotentiaries had now placed the matter in the hands of the allied naval authorities.

As the 1st of May had been the day originally fixed as the expiry of the "*delai fatal*," the excitement became pretty general throughout the fleet on the 30th, more especially in consequence of a signal being made by the flagship for the small-arm men to hold themselves in readiness for landing. General orders were also issued by the Admiral, containing the dispositions of attack. On the 1st, consequently, great were the preparations on board the Furious. Excited midshipmen, staggering under blankets, canteens, and havresacks, rushed frantically about the deck; the

landing-parties had their rations served out, and were told off ; the paddle-box boats were lowered, and the guns put in them ; and all were on the tiptoe of expectation until the afternoon, when it began to be whispered that a change had taken place in the views of the naval Commander-in-chief, and that an attack on the forts was indefinitely postponed. This took all the world by surprise, as nothing had occurred which could explain this alteration of plan.

Thus a second time the policy which Lord Elgin had determined to carry out in his movement to the north sustained a check. On the first occasion, in consequence of the absence of gunboats to support him on his arrival in the Gulf, he had been compelled to invite a Chinese plenipotentiary to meet him at the mouth of the Peiho, instead of proceeding to some point nearer to the capital,—a change of plan which was very injurious, because the mouth of the Peiho was the scene of the abortive negotiations of Sir John Bowring in 1854 ; and now again, when the Chinese Plenipotentiaries had failed to produce their credentials within a fixed period, he was thwarted in his desire to foil their attempts at evasion, by a rapid and immediate movement up the country. The consequences of these delays were serious in the extreme. In a military point of view they are graphically described in the Admiral's despatch of the 21st May, upon the occasion of the taking of the forts three weeks afterwards. "From the arrival of the Ambassa-

dors on the 14th of April," says his Excellency, "the Chinese have used every exertion to strengthen the forts at the entrance to the Peiho ; earthworks, sand-bag batteries, and parapets for the heavy gingalls, have been erected on both sides for a distance of nearly a mile in length, upon which eighty-seven guns in position were visible ; and the whole shore had been piled to oppose a landing." Politically they were even more disastrous, because, by obliging Lord Elgin to protract, at the mouth of the Peiho, negotiations which he clearly saw could lead to no good result, they gave to his proceedings a vacillating character, which was calculated to strengthen the self-confidence of the Chinese diplomatists.